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ABSTRACT

Project WORTH (Work Opportunity Readiness for the Homeless) is a federally funded project in Louisville, Kentucky, in which participants come to the program site from shelters via school bus or from transitional housing by public transportation. Preschool children attend day care on site. The adults participate in a varied program that includes academic classes, life skills classes, job readiness training, and vocational training. Students attend classes 4 days per week, allowing them a business day to visit the social service agencies or to go to the clinics. Staff members use the time for planning and developing programs, visiting clients at centers, and for needed rest and relaxation. Focused interviews were conducted with seven participants after the project had been in operation for 6 months. (It is now in its second full year of operation.) The interviews, reported through quotations from participants, showed that homelessness has many causes, most stemming from physical and emotional neglect in childhood. The participants suffered from low self-esteem and lack of a feeling of belonging, which prevented them from making conscious, rational, future-oriented decisions for themselves. The WORTH project attempted most of all to raise self-esteem and to get participants to think of their own and their children's futures, especially in terms of education. At the time of the study, the project seemed to be succeeding. (KC)

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PROJECT WORTH: RESEARCH REPORT

BY

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RESEARCH REPORT: HOPE FOR THE HOMELESS--PROJECT

WORTH

Project **WORTH**--Work Opportunity Readiness for the Homeless--is a federally funded project, granted to The Adult Education Division of the Jefferson County School District in Louisville, Kentucky. The project, in its second full year of operation, is located in the Duvalle Education Center. Participants are brought to the site from shelters around the city via school bus, or if they live in transitional or Section 8 housing, they are given tickets to ride the city transportation system.

Preschool children come too and are placed in day care on site. The parents can visit them, and eat lunch with them if schedules coincide. Parents and children also participate in activities together when appropriate.

The adults participate in a varied program:

- Academic classes, designed to upgrade skills or prepare for the GED examination
- Life Skills classes, designed to improve the individual's sense of self-esteem and self-confidence
- Job Readiness training, designed to help participants build a repertoire of employability skills
- Vocational Training classes, divided into blocks and focused on the selected interest of the participants. Courses are offered in clerical skills, childcare, small engine repair and maintenance, constructional technology, carpentry, and commercial sewing.

Students attend classes four days a week, allowing them a business day to visit the social service agencies with which they interact, to go to the clinics, or other personal-care facilities. The staff uses the time for planning and development of programs, visitation of clients at centers and for needed R&R.

This study was conducted after the project had been in operation for approximately six months.

Seven Project WORTH participants were selected for focused interviews in order to determine the extent of the program's effect on them as individuals as well as its effect upon their families. The seven were chosen as representative of the larger group because of their distribution in a variety of shelters, emergency and transitional; their marital status, single, separated, and married; their age span, 21-41; their race, two black and five white; and their gender, two males and five females. They were first interviewed as a group and then individually. Their interviews are compiled into a case-study report, personal in nature but general in application. The following narrative contains actual quotes from the participants, and each is considered genuine and as truthful as cautious people can be. The data were triangulated by interviews with staff and by researcher observation.

As the interviews began, the "grand tour question" was simply, "Please tell me about your involvement in Project Worth." As each participant unfolded his or her own story, the researcher focused on certain aspects which seemed to connect the past with the present. Four questions were selected for centering:

1. The changes in myself which I have observed and which I feel are a result of this program are...
2. The things in the program that have been most successful for me as an individual are...
3. The things about the program which have caused me the most problems are...
4. The immediate and long-range goals that I have set

as a result of this program are....

Commonalities, patterns, and categories quickly surfaced, and these groupings provided the units for discussion in this report.

Other discussions and reports pertaining to the population known as "the homeless" most often refer to their current lack of income, their lack of material possessions, their lack of affordable housing, and perhaps their lack of dignity. While all these "lacks" are genuine and acute, there is more to the story. The deprivation is neither one-dimensional nor one-generational. To understand how and why the people in this program are part of "the homeless community," it is necessary to look into their pasts. Such a perusal reveals a strong connection to the present. Therefore, the first section of this report focuses on those aspects of the participants' backgrounds that are most pivotal in relation their present life circumstances. The second section points to the influence of the Worth Project on participants' short and long-term goals.

Even though the Worth Project students assign self-blame to their situations and claim they are accountable for their failures, the heavy mantel of responsibility is not all theirs. In most cases, the basic physical, emotional, and psychological needs of these people were not met or maintained when they were children.

Although they report no real cases of starvation or even unrelenting hunger, food was usually purchased from the sale

bins with an eye for quantity over quality and often prepared in ways that were not healthy or nutritious. It did not seem to go far enough, they say. "I was a skinny kid; we just never seemed to have enough food to go around...the younger kids needed it most." When speaking about their basic physical needs, the respondents defend those whom the system holds responsible: "My mother tried--she done the best she could." "Dad just couldn't seem to get enough money to buy a decent bag of groceries."

Cleanliness, both personal and environmental, was a luxury and generally not considered essential or important in homes which tried to shelter 7 or 9 or 11 children. Consequently, hygiene habits today are not conducive to healthy bodies. Often, young people in their early twenties are missing part or all of their teeth, suffer from inordinately debilitating illnesses, and lack a sense of what is considered common good grooming. Apartments in transitional housing, rooms and personal areas in shelters suffer from a lack of care and good housekeeping practices.

Love, spoken or shown, is not only a basic emotional need, it is a right of every child. But many of these people report that they never heard the word and never experienced the feeling from their own parents. The sense of belonging--having identity and stability--was non existent for most. Street survival was learned early, but the kind of future-oriented survival that is accompanied by "hope" was not a part of their lives. Today, the crisis situation controls

them; many see no way out.

Psychological readiness in adults is a result of self-esteem and self-worth, which in turn, come from having learned how to cope with life. Coping skills are part of the learning skills which most people glean from interaction in the educational environment. But these students report that school was not a priority for most of their parents. Some were 2nd, 3rd, and 6th grade dropouts. Some paid lip service to the advantages of schooling but did not enforce the value of learning.

Learning needs of children transcend the school; they extend into the remote areas of kitchens and closets, backyards and back alleys, grocery stores and city halls. These learning experiences must come from parents and others in the family. When parents have not fulfilled their "first-teacher" role, when they have not completed their task of raising their dependent children to be independent adults, when they have not provided security or direction, these learning needs are not met. The results are the perpetuation of the cycle of dysfunctional homes and disintegrating families: illiteracy, poverty, welfare, and degradation.

EMOTIONAL NEEDS

The "attribution theory" holds that when a person ascribes success or failure to oneself, the successes can be repeated and the failures avoided. But when one has a history of emotional deprivation, it becomes difficult if not

impossible to separate culpability from blamelessness. "Why," for example, "doesn't anyone like me? I must not be likable."

Because of her childhood experiences, Flo is not sure that people are naturally attracted to her and admits that she tries to buy friendships. She does this, she says, because she had disappointed both her mother and her father by being a girl. She tried hard to "be a boy for them" by becoming involved in sports, by being tough, and by looking masculine. Still, they did not support her by coming to her games or even by feigned interest in her activities. She was never able to "buy" their love, but Flo continues to try to purchase attention from others with gifts and favors. At the center where she lives, she even does chores for others who do not do their jobs. When the social workers tell her that she should not do that, Flo says, "But I want them to like me."

She says she is learning not to do this, but it is difficult to break the behavior pattern. Recently, one of the other residents at the spouse-abuse center gave Flo a two-liter bottle of soda. "It feels good to have someone care for me," she admits, and a softness replaces the brash facade for a moment.

She lacked the identity and sense of belonging that develops when one is a recognized member of a family. "My parents were never there when I needed them," she says. "I don't remember ever being hugged." Her hugs have come from

men who mistreated her, fathered her three children, abused her and the babies, and disappeared. So hungry for love that she is willing to submit herself to their cruelty, Flo remarried a man who had been in jail for assault, and as a result, lost custody of her children.

Lacking the security of a stable household as a child, she sought stability and direction in a career as a woman wrestler. "I met a nice lady who offered me a future," she says, and at fifteen, Flo left her family to join the tour. Traveling was nothing new to her. She has lived and been schooled in 36 states, following a father who was an itinerant farm worker. Always the new kid on the block, always the one who did not belong, she learned early "you have to fight for what you want." Her security came from her ability to win "cat fights," a skill which paved her way into the arena, where she was billed as "the bad girl." "I was the one everybody booed--everybody hated."

Accepting this role of rejection, she also accepted the battering by her husband, which seemed a natural extension of the emotional battering inflicted upon her by her parents. Now, at 23, Flo lives in the spouse-abuse center, alone.

Marlene, the Director of the Worth Project, remembers her first impression of Flo. "She was rough and tumble tough. I wanted to walk around her; she was non-approachable." But six weeks later, Flo placed valentines on the desks of the teachers and staff in the program.

Like Flo, Vince never knew what "security" meant when he

was a child. The oldest of nine children, he had to grow up quickly. His dad never held a steady job, and the children suffered from that. They moved often, changing neighborhoods and schools, losing friends and identities. "I resented that," Vince admits, and "we don't get along now. I don't want them (mom and dad) in my life."

Neither stability nor the security that comes with it have been a part of his adult life, either. Feelings of rejection surface again when he speaks about his wife, who left one day while he slept. "She told me she had to go to the store," he says, "but she never came home. She was tired of things the way they were." Vince and his three children live in the Rangeland Apartments, and he tries to give them the nurturing they miss from their mother. But, he says "it is hard to provide for all their emotional needs." He intends, though, to provide them with the identity and direction that were missing in his childhood.

Marlene believes that part of Vince's success in the program is due to the nurturing that he receives. "People here care about him and about his children," she says, "and that is something new for him."

Vince was abandoned emotionally as a child and literally as an adult. James also knows what abandonment means. He and three brothers lived in foster homes and a boy's shelter after their parents left them alone in "that big, pink, two-story house," which still and will forever exist in the recesses of a man-child's memory. At the age of five James

became the care-giver, even though he had an older brother. He heard nothing from or about his parents for two years. When his dad showed up, the two older boys were given over to him, but he left his sons again in a few months. After that, James was on his own. He was never adopted and felt he never really belonged in any of the families that agreed to shelter him.

His wife, Gala, also lived in a foster home, sent there at the age of six by a resentful father and two spiteful, older sisters. "The girls drove my mother crazy with their drugs and lifestyles. I took her side against them, and Dad stood up for them. When Mom had to go into the mental hospital, Dad gave me to my mom's stepbrother, and I lived with him for three years."

When their youngest child died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, it was like being abandoned again. Gala suffered her own mental illness, overcome by depression and grief. James and Gala became wanderers, and Marlene says they are "like Job--everything has happened to them." And, like Job, James has fought back for so long that at 28, he is already tired. Quiet, reticent, and seemingly weak, he lets his wife dominate the family. He does not like to make decisions, and his "ambition is scattered," according to Marlene. It is as though he had an arrest of emotional growth when he realized that his mother and father were gone for good.

Earlene knows, too, about vanishing parents. Her father "just disappeared," she says when she was fifteen. She is

the oldest of five children and was left with adult responsibilities. She feels that all the nurturing and love that her mother was capable of giving went to the younger brother and sisters. Even now, she feels that no one is concerned with her situation, not even her mother. "She just don't care about me," Earlene says.

Marlene says that Earlene is completely depressed, hostile and angry. "She has chosen to withdraw and has no friends." Earlene confirms her lack of friendships and hesitancy to form emotional bonds. So much is going on in her life, and she is "trying to handle one thing at a time."

Unable to find either security or shelter in her marriage to a drug addict, Earlene and her four children live in transitional housing while she waits for approval to move into a low-income housing development. It seems like more than 11 years since her father left, Earlene says. There are so many problems, and "I am very sad. I do not seem to belong anywhere."

Connie did not belong in her family either. She is the fifth of 11 children, and when she was not yet a year old, her father gave her away. "Come and get her if you want her," he told his brother. The uncle came and also took one of Connie's brothers to live with him and his wife. The siblings never see each other. "They are scattered everywhere," Connie says. Her foster parents never adopted her, but she feels they are her "real parents," she says. "They care about me even though they cannot do anything for

us financially now." Connie does not like to admit it, but her foster parents sent her away when she became pregnant out of wedlock for the second time. At the age of 21, she has been rejected twice by parents, several times by men, and now lives with her four children at the Salvation Army.

Marlene remembers how childlike Connie was when she first came into the program. "She was deprived of affection and caring. She used to follow the staff around, much like a small child or an animal seeking attention. She was always 'the good girl' fishing for compliments and praise from us." As her due date drew closer, Connie tended to step back, to miss more school days. "A heaviness seemed to overtake her," Marlene says, "and all the little girl aspects were gone. It seemed as though she was overwhelmed with this huge sense of responsibility that comes from being both mother and father to all those children."

Sharon says she doesn't know much about her father. "He left when I was very young. There were already eight children in the family by then." Her mother cares about her, she says, but Sharon gets no help from anybody in her family. One of her sisters died two years ago, and the grandmother accepted the responsibility of the two children left behind. "That's all she can handle," Sharon says. Brothers and sisters do not offer help, and she says she would not accept it if they did. "I want to try to make it on my own," Sharon says. So, she lives in transitional housing, hoping one day soon to have the kind of job she needs to support herself and

her son and to live in a "good home in a nice neighborhood."

Sharon is so private that staff and students do not know her well. Marlene says she always smiles and seems "to be up." But there are times when she seems "overly appropriate" as though, like Connie, "she wants us to say, `such a good girl.'"

PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

The missing element from all the personalities in the Worth Project is self-esteem or a sense of self-worth. It is no wonder, since years of failure preceded the final blows which knocked these people into the "homeless community." Even though they assume the blame, responsibility for these failures cannot rest solely on these individuals. The parents, the schools, and society are jointly involved.

Flo says she never did amount to anything as far as her parents were concerned. Not only were they disappointed that she was a girl, they seemed disappointed that she was even born, according to Flo. "They just didn't care about me," she says. "They showed little concern about anything I did, including school. When I told them that I was going to quit, they said `fine, if you want to quit--quit." Education was not a priority for them because neither of them finished school. Flo's dad dropped out in grade 10 and her mother only finished 5th grade. "My brother and I got a raw deal," Flo believes.

Her feelings about herself carry over into her relationships with other people. Part of the rationale for

quitting school was that she could not get along with other students or the teachers. She sees herself as pleasant and "good humored," liking to joke and tease those around her, considering this to be a way of establishing friendships. "But," says Marlene, "others do not view her teasing as friendly. She has a way of `zinging' others, saying things that put others down, which creates a wall between them. I believe she does this purposefully to keep others at a distance." For example, Flo teased Connie about being pregnant, calling her "Prego" most of the time. Connie, who had kept her coat on to hide her pregnancy at first, was intimidated by Flo and pretended to laugh it off.

Flo is so used to physical and emotional battering that the physical pain associated with abuse seems to her a way of defining love. "She needs to learn," says Marlene, "that pain and love are not the same. She has not had enough counseling yet. She has to get away from the brutality or she will continue to send out the vibes that give a feeling of non-approachability."

Connie's lack of self-worth goes all the way back to early childhood, when she "was not important enough for her parents to keep." Then when she was in school, "the teachers," she says, "only cared about the best students--the popular ones--they got all the attention." Marlene remembers "how deprived of caring" Connie seemed to be. She needed to be close to us all the time. She had such low self-esteem."

Connie says, "Nobody else made my mistakes, and I don't

depend upon others to do for me. I do it on my own." But it is clear that it would be easier for her if she did have someone who cared about her. "Sometimes..." she trails off into nothingness. Then she adds, "A child needs to know that her parents are interested."

James and Gala are more than interested. They are committed to their children. James says they are the only things that matter. "That," says Marlene is not true. James matters, too. He, however, does not think so. It was obvious how he felt about himself when he first came here. He would not look at us or talk to us very much. He was so quiet that we did not realize, at first, how bright he is."

He had just begun to become involved with the program when Gala entered. "It was as though she had moved into his world," Marlene says, "and she took over. He was so willing to let her--he didn't think he could do it."

The sadness that seems to overwhelm Earlene is an extension of her feeling about herself. Believing that her mother cares more for the brothers and sisters than for her, Earlene laments her loss of family..."Nobody cares." Not even her husband. "His habit got me where I am today," she says. The stress associated with constant feelings of rejection contributes to Earlene's lack of self-esteem. This in turn creates tension with all those around her. She admits difficulty getting along with family and those with whom she associates in the program.

Perhaps Vince is the most vivid example of what the lack

of self-worth does to a person. When he first entered the Worth Program, he came sans clothes, sans teeth, sans cleanliness. He was caustic and impolite. Marlene says the staff saw the need to work hard on his image. "He thought he was not worthy of the time and effort it takes to clean up or to spend money on himself. All the money received from human services went for his children. He used to say, `they are all that is important.'" He learned that behavior from the constant need to "give up everything" to the eight younger brothers and sisters in his family. The suppressed anger he experienced as a child later became a sense of despair. He withdrew from people and was reluctant to discuss his problems with anyone.

BENEFITS FROM THE PROGRAM
(As seen through the eyes of the Project Participants who served as respondents in this case study)

Vince readily offers, "This is the best thing that has ever happened to me. I like myself better. I like being around people, and that makes me want to be polite. I care now about how I look. I have made some special friends." He likes the program and the classes so much that he has not missed a day. For once, Vince is number one. "I feel that my priority has to be to get my skills, to complete my studies so that I can get a good job." His despair has turned to hope, both for the immediate future and for long-range goals.

One of the goals he never dreamed could be realized is

the education of his children. His 17-year-old son had quit school because the district transferred him when they found out he had moved. "Nobody could get him to go back, not the social workers, not the courts, not the school counselors. But when he saw me in school, he got real interested. He has always been a good reader, and I asked him to help me with some of my homework. He started to read my school books and quiz me. Now, he is coming with me, attends the lab classes and will soon take his GED exam. He's even talking about going to college and law school. I tell him I'll do whatever it takes to get him through. When I think back, I remember how all those people tried to get my son to go to school, but he came back when he saw me in school."

Vince's 7-year-old has also become more interested in reading. "He comes in with me to study, and we do our homework together," Vince says. "My little girl sits there with us and listens. She pretends to read. She scribbles and does her `homework,'too. She is only three, but she is learning a lot."

She gets her father up at 6:30 every morning and says, "Let's go. We have to go to school." She attends the day care program while her father studies accounting and bookkeeping. Vince expresses pride in the whole family when he says, "My children won't be like my parents and my brothers and sisters--they all quit school before the 9th grade. My children are going to graduate and be ready to get a good job."

Vince says that since he entered the Worth Program, he has not been discouraged at all. Once he acquires the skills he needs, he intends to go to work as an office clerk. Then, he says, "When I get on my feet--get established and everything--I am going to buy my own restaurant. That is my dream."

Marlene's goal for him is to be self-sufficient and out of the system. "He will get a good apartment and begin to build a better life for the children. They are his whole life," she says, and "he needs to get all he can for them. Right now, he gets what he gets only in the program."

Earlene wants to take the GED test in May and then get more training and job skills. She appreciates the day care center which her children attend while she is in class. At first her daughter did not want to leave her mother, but one day, she said, "Bye, Mommy, and that was that. She has been fine ever since." Like Vince, Earlene serves as a school and study model for her children. "We are together more now than we used to be--studying and playing. The kids are doing better in school, too."

She knows she will have to learn to drive someday, soon, and it does not seem as scary as it once did. The small school successes and the improvement in her self-esteem are leading her toward more success. She likes her typing class and believes that it won't be long until she has a good job.

Her toughest and bravest decision came a few days after this interview, when she elected to commit her husband to the

Drug and Alcohol Abuse Center. She could not have done that earlier. She did not have the confidence. "He had stolen her self-esteem, but he will no longer steal her AFDC money and food stamps to trade for drugs," says Marlene. "It broke her heart to declare him incompetent, but she said she wanted to save his life." Maybe they will get back together someday as Earlene says she wants to do, but even if they don't, she has begun to build a new life and to look toward the future.

Gala and James are also appreciative of the day care facilities available to them in the program. Their 3-year-old daughter stays there while Gala studies to complete her GED. She is already enrolled in pre-nursing classes in the vocational education school. "I have wanted to be a nurse since I was a little girl," she says, but I never thought it could happen. Now it can, and I will be a good nurse because I know what it's like to feel helpless."

James is one of the few in the program who has finished high school, and he is concentrating on developing job skills. "My short-term goal is to learn construction," he says, "but I am really interested in business management. I think that one day I will build my own home, too. That is a promise I have made to Gala."

They, too, see a difference in the way they view their children's education. "Our children look up to us for being here. They like it that the whole family is in school, and they know that we are trying to make things better." When the family arrives home, they set aside their studies to

spend some fun time together as a family, and then after supper, they do homework. "We help each other. We all are interested in what the others are doing."

Marlene says they are survivors and they will make it. They may drag their feet, but they won't quit. Gala is absolutely sure of it. "We've come a long way," she says, "and we're going to keep on going."

Flo also thinks more about the future and taking care of "the three little ones," as she calls them. "When all this mess is cleared up and I get the children back, I will have them here with me in day care. I am going to complete my GED and get job skills. Project Worth has made me realize how important education really is. I will tell my children to stay in school--to learn things and to feel good about themselves."

Marlene says the program is so good for Flo because it is one of the few positive things in her life. "It gives her a place to go and something worthwhile to do." She is developing an independence and a willing spirit that she says will help her provide the best she can for herself and the kids. "I know I will do it," she says, "and soon."

Sharon's dream is to complete her GED and then to become a computer operator. She likes what the program has done for her and her son, as well. She shows more interest in his school work, and he shows interest in hers. "We talk about our studies and do our homework together. We read to each other. He knows that this is going to help us get off

welfare."

She believes she has matured a great deal in these few months. "I take life more seriously now," she says. "I am a better mother and more concerned about life. My son realizes the change in me, and he likes it." Marlene agrees with the assessment. "Sharon started out in the `literacy component' and moved up fast. She is now studying for her GED and she is succeeding."

Connie's situation is one of the most tragic. At 21 and the mother of four children under 4, she seems locked into the system. Marlene asks, "Can she be anything but a welfare mother until those children are grown?" Connie thinks she can and certainly wants to be. She has completed her GED and is taking clerical classes: typing, bookkeeping, and computers. The program has given her skills she did not have before, and her life has been touched in a positive way.

She says she has learned to apply herself more since joining the program, and thinks about her children's education differently. "I'm learning more responsibility," she says, "because you can't be a kid and watch out for little kids. I will do whatever it takes to get them into a life that is not dependent on welfare. They deserve better."

Not one of these respondents indicated a belief that society is to blame for their plight. They are driven by self-blame, assuming that homelessness and poverty are penalties for their own mistakes and failures. They want out, but it is clear that they must have help.

CONCLUSIONS

(From the Researcher and the Project Worth Staff)

1. Homelessness is a complex issue. It is not alone, as Kozol (1988) attempts to prove, the result of unaffordable housing. Of course, that is a major issue, but juxtaposed to a lack of housing are intergenerational issues. These issues include emotional, psychological, educational, and physical deprivations in childhood which result in attitudes, values, and actions that lend themselves to inappropriate adult behaviors. Appropriate role models were absent in most cases from their lives, and this has impacted upon the lives of their children, creating generations of at-risk children. Decision-making skills are non-existent, and the inability to make wise choices can create an unstable environment in which lack of housing becomes only one of the conditions.

2. Homeless people, sheltered in emergency or transitional housing are controlled by the crisis situation, which can include the illness of themselves, their children, their parents, or even friends; the need to visit agencies to obtain services; the time limitations established for shelters, the paper work required for payments and services, and others. Participants in this program have been as "present-oriented" and controlled by crises as other homeless people, but are now becoming more "future-oriented," able to postpone resolutions until solutions other than those which promote a continuation of the cycle of crises. The order and

structure of the WORTH Program lend focus to the lives of the participants. WORTH is a shelter away from the shelter, which provides cleanliness, organization, and stability that are missing in their daily lives.

3. The success of Project WORTH will be attributed to strategic planning. Strategic planning is far-sighted and involves the development of long-term goals with the promise of long-term gains. Such planning is proactive rather than reactive, meaning that the plan drives the action instead of the reverse. Strategic planning also allows for mediation, intervention, and adjustment based on formative and summative evaluation. Where this program is concerned, the strategic planning involves:

(a) allowing time for trust to build among the participants, as well as between participants and staff. Natural questions arise from past experiences with the social services, and participants ask, "Am I being used? Are these people sincere?"

(b) preparing people for steady jobs rather than training them with a few immediate skills and then flinging them out into the market where they might work for a few days or weeks and then return to their old shelters and life styles. The bottom line here is for these participants to learn how to learn, how to be employable, how to survive. Job placement is not enough. Life placement is their ticket out. Life

placement includes (besides employability training) experiences which promote self-esteem and raise psychological awareness; instruction in parenting skills and child-care; information on nutrition and hygiene; and above all-- education which will place them among the literate population in America. This life placement plan provides for a layer of skills that will have lasting effects and improve the lives of those who are in the homeless population.

(c) developing an awareness of the intergenerational effects of living in shelters. The goal here is for parents to acquire a sense of responsibility for instilling values and mores, and coping skills in their children which will encourage independence from the system.

(d) developing an awareness of intergenerational literacy. The goal here is to raise the consciousness of parents regarding what was educationally absent in their own lives and how that deprivation can affect the next generation. Not only do they see the importance of education, they are learning the value of learning, giving direction and focus to an educational plan, showing interest in their children's performance in the educational setting, and interacting with the school personnel.

4. Providing day care for the children of the participants is of paramount importance. If possible, this care should extend to preschool training where applicable and appropriate. Concern for their children creates one of the most problematic situations for the WORTH students.

5. Training teachers and staff about substance abuse, child and spouse abuse, as well as impairments caused from mental and emotional illness is of primary importance.

6. At risk students, whether they are children or adults, require more trained counselors, who are able to handle situations that arise when people are living in inadequate housing with too little food, too little security, too little guidance, too little freedom from pain.

7. Planning should include many opportunities for early successes, necessary to induce retention and create excitement for further striving. Self-confidence and self-worth emerge, often for the first time, with a few small accomplishments. These successes should have both personal and group implications.

8. A plan for recruitment should be initiated, which includes a visiting team made up of WORTH staff as well as shelter and social services personnel.